

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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SUBJ: FOREMAN PRESS CONFERENCE

1. IN COURSE OF PRESS CONFERENCE SEP 25, GEORGE FOREMAN DECLINED, ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS, TO PIN DOWN OCT 29 (OCT 30 HERE) AS DATE OF TITLE DEFENSE AGAINST ALI. BANDAGE CAME OFF EARLIER SEP 25; INJURED EYE AREA APPEARED UNMARKED.

2. FRINCTION EVIDENT BETWEEN PROMOTERS (JOHN DALY, DON KING, MURRAY GOODMAN) WHO TRIED DESPERATELY TO GET COMMITMENT ON OCT 29 DATE AND FOREMAN, WHO, ALTHOUGH INSISTING HE WANTED TO FIGHT "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE" IN ZAIRE, WOULD NOT COMMIT HIMSELF.

3. FOREMAN HAS SPENT PAST FOUR DAYS AT INTER-CONTINENTAL HOTEL, RATHER THAN AT HIS VILLA AT N'SELE. ON SEP 24 JOHN DALY, PRESIDENT OF HEMDALE LEISURE CORPORATION WAS OVERHEARD IN CORRIDOR SAYING "FOREMAN IS TRYING TO BLACKMAIL US." HE THEN SENT FOR MANDUNGU BULA TO SEE FOREMEN WITH HIM. WHATEVER

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TOOK PLACE BETWEEN BULA, KING, AND FOREMAN, IT

WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO FORCE FOREMAN TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO OCT 29 DATE.

4. FOREMAN WAS CERTAINLY NOT AT HIS BEST WITH PRESS, AT ONE POINT CHALLENGING JACK GRIFFIN OF CHICAGO SUN-TIMES TO "FIGHT RIGHT NOW" AND THEN TELLING HIM TO "SHUT UP", WHEN GRIFFIN PRESSED FOREMAN FOR COMMITMENT ON DATE.

5. ANOTHER CORRESPONDENT ASKED PROMOTER DON KING WHEN THE FIGHT WOULD OCCUR. KING REPLIED, "THE FIGHT WILL OCCUR OCT 29."

6. EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT AGENCY MONITOR JOHN VINOCUR AP STORY ("I'M SORRY," SAID VINOCUR TO FOREMAN MANAGER DICK SADLER. "I CAN'T WRITE THAT THE FIGHT WILL TAKE PLACE OCT 29") AND IF POSSIBLE, GRIFFIN STORY IN CHICAGO SUN-TIMES.

7. PROMOTERS ANXIOUS TO FIX DEFINITE DATE SO THEATER COMMITMENTS AND TICKET SALES CAN GET UNDER WAY. IN POST-CONFERENCE PARLEY, GOODMAN TOLD DALY THAT THEY HAD TO GET A COMMITMENT ON A DATE SOON. DALY, LOOKING NUMBED BY EVENTS OF PAST WEEK, STARED BLANDLY. (DALY IS THE ONLY ONE OF THE PROMOTERS WHO HAS A LARGE PERSONAL FINANCIAL STAKE--REPORTEDLY \$1.6 MILLION--IN FIGHT). DON KING SAID TO HIM, WITH A GRIM LOOK ON HIS FACE, "THE FIGHT WILL TAKE PLACE OCT 29".

8. LOCAL MEDIA PUT A PECULIARLY ZAIRIAN INTERPRETATION ON FOREMAN'S REMARKS THAT HE WANTED TO FIGHT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SAYING THE HE "CAN DEFEND HIS TITLE TODAY". VOICE OF ZAIRE RADIO COMMENT MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS IMPLYING, IF ANYTHING, THAT AS FAR AS THE ZAIRIANS ARE CONCERNED, FOREMAN MIGHT EVEN BE READY TO FIGHT BEFORE OCT 29. ZAIRIAN DAILY SALONGO HEADLINED PRESS CONFERENCE STORY WITH OUT OF CONTEXT FOREMAN REMARK: "I AM READY TO FIGHT BEGINNING TODAY".

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